

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY

USMISSION NATO PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 278416

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, MARR, GW, UK

SUBJECT: HARMONIZATION OF TANK PROGRAMS

REFS: A. LONDON 17773 DTG 041743Z NOV 76; B. BONN 18558

DTG 040916Z NOV 76; C. DOD 3584 DTG 023414Z NOV 76 (NOTAL);

D. LONDON 17932, DTG 081718Z NOV 76

1. 2 NOV MULLEY-LEBER DISCUSSION SUMMARIZED BY REF B
INDICATES LONDON WILL GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO BONN
OFFER CONCERNING UK PRODUCTION OF FRG SMOOTHBORE TANK
GUN UNDER COST-FREE LICENSE. WE ARE HEARTENED BY THIS
DEVELOPMENT WHICH MAY OPEN NEW PHASE OF UK-FRG COOPERATION

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IN WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION.

2. PER REF C, US HAS ALREADY ENCOURAGED UK AND FRG TO SEEK ACCOMMODATION ON TANK GUN ISSUE. US HAS NOT YET DECIDED BETWEEN SMOOTH AND RIFLED BORE, BUT IF IT IS DEMONSTRATED THAT BOTH GUNS ARE EQUALLY COMBAT EFFECTIVE, AND IF UK AND FRG AGREE ON SELECTION, THE US WOULD PROBABLY ADOPT WHICHEVER WEAPON THEY SELECT. LONDON AND BONN AGREEMENT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE LESS EXPENSIVE THAN CONTINUED NATIONAL TANK GUN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. IN ADDITION, ALL THREE COUNTRIES WOULD BENEFIT FROM INCREASED ALLIANCE COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS DERIVED FROM STANDARD 120MM

AMMUNITION. ALTHOUGH REF A INDICATES LONDON IS UNLIKELY TO ACCEPT OFFER QTE AT THIS EARLY STAGE, UNQTE REQUEST EMBASSY FOLLOW UP AND PROVIDE ANY FURTHER UK REACTION.

3. FURTHER REQUEST EMBASSY SUGGEST AT MOD STAFF LEVEL THAT US WOULD BE WILLING TO ENTER INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT FOR UK PRODUCTION OF US TANK ENGINE UNDER LICENSE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT UK HAS AGREED TO INSTALL A NEW ENGINE IN IMPROVED CHIEFTAIN FOR IRAN. REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING BRITISH TANK ENGINE BY ONE BASED ON TECHNOLOGY US IS WILLING TO SHARE WOULD BE MORE COST EFFECTIVE THAN INDEPENDENT UK R AND D EFFORT. IT WOULD ALSO COUNTER RECENT BRITISH PRESS ALLEGATIONS THAT U.K. QUOTE GAVE AWAY UNQUOTE CHOBHAM ARMOR WITHOUT RECEIVING ANYTHING IN RETURN (REF D). IN ADDITION, BECAUSE US AND FRG HAVE ALREADY AGREED TO EMPLOY SAME TANK ENGINE, UK PARTICIPATION WOULD PROVIDE ADVANTAGES IN COMBAT RESULTING FROM COMMON MAINTENANCE, FUEL AND OTHER LOGISTIC SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS.

4. IF UK IS RECEPTIVE TO ABOVE, WE WOULD WISH TO EXPLORE WITH BONN AND LONDON POSSIBILITY OF UK JOINING US-FRG TANK HARMONIZATION PROGRAM PROVIDED THIS DOES NOT RESULT IN ADDITIONAL DELAYS IN US TANK PROGRAM. UK HAS ALREADY PROVIDED SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO PROGRAM THROUGH ARMOR TECHNOLOGY.

5. SECDEF MAY ADDRESS TANK PROGRAM WITH MULLEY AND LEBER
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DURING 17-18 NOVEMBER NPG.

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